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Cultural Landscape Identification, Review and Assessment: The Case of Ghadames

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Аңдатпа. Мақалада бүкіләлемдік мұра нысандарының сақталу проблемалары мен мәселелері қарастырылған. Гадамес қаласының мәдени ландшафты әлемдегі ең тартымды нысандарының бірі болып табылады. Гадамес мұрасының үлкен тарихи маңыздылығына қарамастан, қазіргі уақытта, Гадамес қаласы, ЮНЕСКО Бүкіләлемдік мұрасының нысаны бола тұра, ауқымды проблемаларға тап болуда.

Кілт сөздер: мәдени ландшафттар, Сахара, ежелгі оазис, Гадамес, бүкіләлемдік мұрасының нысандары, мұраны жоспарлау.

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются вопросы и текущие проблемы сохранения объектов всемирного наследия. Считается, что культурный ландшафт Гадамеса является одним из самых привлекательных объектов наследия в мире. Несмотря на огромное историческое значение наследия Гадамеса, выясняется, что в настоящее время город Гадамес, объект Всемирного наследия ЮНЕСКО, сталкивается с серьезными проблемами.

Ключевые слова: культурные ландшафты, Сахара, древний оазис, Гадамес, объекты всемирного наследия, планирование наследия.

Abstract. The Cultural Landscape of Ghadames is one of the most attractive heritage site in the world. The author has discovered lots of heritage values such as its exceptional urban fabric and impressive architectural character of its interior spaces. The entire urban structures are shaded and surrounded by its bountiful gardens. Despite the richness of Ghadames with historic significance, it is found that at the present time, Ghadames city, the UNESCO World Heritage Site, is facing serious challenges including the abandonment by its tenants and inclusive negligence by its officials. The author however, believes that Ghadames can illustrate an excellent heritage example in the Middle East for its cultural pride and socio-economic opportunities that can contribute to overall economic development for its people in the Sahara region. However, the paper deals with the case of Ghadames "The World Heritage Site" in Libya, North Africa and discusses the current challenges and possible planning for its heritage conservation strategy.

Key Words: Cultural Landscapes; Sahara; Ancient Oasis; Ghadames; World Heritage Sites; and, Heritage Planning.

Introduction:

The oasis of Ghadames in the Libya's Sahara region with its unique memory and impressive natural and human heritage is currently in under pressure and confronting with the 21st century challenges, as a result, Ghadames is suffering from depopulation, improper introduction of "new" amenities and limited protection with regular maintenance with proper preservation. This is mainly happening because of the lack of public support and appreciation of natural and human heritage. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to highlight the significance of heritage values of the ancient oasis along its adobe city of Ghadames, Libya. In order to make Ghadames an attractive site which can symbolize the cultural pride for the community, it is important to encourage continuous uses and/or introduce new uses such as tourism which can provide sustainable development in the region.

The Ancient Oases of the Sahara with Special Reference to the Case of Ghadames:

The Sahara desert region is located from the Atlantic ocean along the coast of North Africa and extends south up to central Africa. It is characterized by its rocky and flat arid landscapes which are mainly covered with sand dunes. Climatic conditions are known with very hot summer with average temperatures of 35 and reach 48 °C and very cold winter nights with temperatures can drop to 0 °C. The landscape of the Sahara is characterized generally with arid and hot environment which provided limited natural resources around many ancient oases in the region. These distinctive oases provided a place for the Sahara's inhabitants to live and work since ancient times to date.

The oases of the Sahara were connected and worked together for many centuries from early era and continued until mid the 1950s by caravan routes. These ancient passageways were the main commercial exchange hubs throughout the Sahara region. These routes connected all towns and cities of the Sahara desert region such as Tangier, Marrakesh in Morocco; Kano, Nigeria; Tombouctou, Mali, Ghadames and Tripoli, Libya. The ancient oases surrounded these adobe towns which protected them from severe weather during summer. The historic towns presented significant culture landscape planning, architecture and unique construction techniques which survived for centuries.

The heritage Ghadames was planned and built with extraordinary architecture which is characterized by its compact and organic urban form, covered streets, exceptional street arches, and three floor high adobe structures and with its locally available materials, including sun dried brick, gravel, gypsum and lime were usually used. Palm tree trunks were employed as structural beams under the roof layers. The palm leaf branches with their fronds, leaf stems and leaves were also used to build the main organic components for roof construction. Ancient building technology was established along thermal passive thoughts.

Thus, the use of indigenous building skills enabled the traditional builders to provide a good shelter from the harsh conditions of the Sahara's hot environment. In addition, the roof mass was finished with a thin layer of gypsum plaster on top and then painted with a limestone whitewash to reflect the maximum amount of sun rays from penetrating the roof materials during hot summers.

These building construction techniques have provided houses and other buildings in Ghadames with natural cooling systems which were based on passive thermal behavior methods. In addition, the old Ghadames is surrounded by oases gardens to provide shade and ensure the necessary protection against seasonal hot winds and sandstorms from the surrounding arid desert lands. However, Ghadames possesses distinctive heritage qualifications with its indigenous planning and architecture style.

Ghadames with its historic importance was able to gain the international recognition which was approved by *UNESCO* in 1986 as a world heritage site. The historic city of Ghadames is located in the southwest from Tripoli, Libya by 600 kilometers. Currently is situated on the Libyan territory along the modern/national borders of Tunisia, Algeria and Libya. Ghadames was also economically fortunate by its ancient strategic position which was connected by the major earliest axes of the trans-Saharan caravan routes.

Challenges:

Despite of these exceptional features, Ghadames is currently facing challenges which are threatening its sustainable survival. The major challenges are:

1. Some of the preservation actions such as the structural alterations along with installing contemporary amenities/systems in the line of moving up towards modernization, e.g. water supply, sanitation, waste collection and transportation systems

for the ancient towns like Ghadames, have put additional pressures on this sensitive heritage site.

2. Other pressures are now building up due to the depopulation of the locals of Ghadames and who left their homes and properties and moved to the new cities nearby. On the other hand, many empty houses were left for groups of transient population. This has also added new the pressures on the heavy and improper space use form this transient population. In many cases, abandoned cities became a safe haven to new immigrant populations who are usually poor, unemployed or who are hiding as they entered the country illegally.

3. The Depopulation of houses and/or occupying them with a large numbers of transient populations led to Physical deterioration because of owners negligence and/to the lack of routine maintenance.

4. Natural pressures including, erosion and physical deterioration due to rain, wind, sandstorms, temperature differences

Conclusions and Recommendation:

In the last four decades, contemporary development and economic growth have ignored the prosperity of the oases heritage cities with their indigenous values. The new development has paid special attention to capital cities which have grown rapidly and, as a result, the heritage towns and cities have ended up with losing most of their physical, socio-cultural and economic values.

In heritage oases such as Ghadames with its indigenous architecture is currently facing several constraints including, public neglect and the lack of regular maintenance with sufficient preservation methods. This new situation is really damaging the durability and coherence of the physical and aesthetic values, cultural entity and economic future of this important heritage site. Preservation of human and natural heritage is highly important. This can be exemplified by the unique oases, impressive architectural styles and the socio-cultural fabric of each site across the Sahara region.

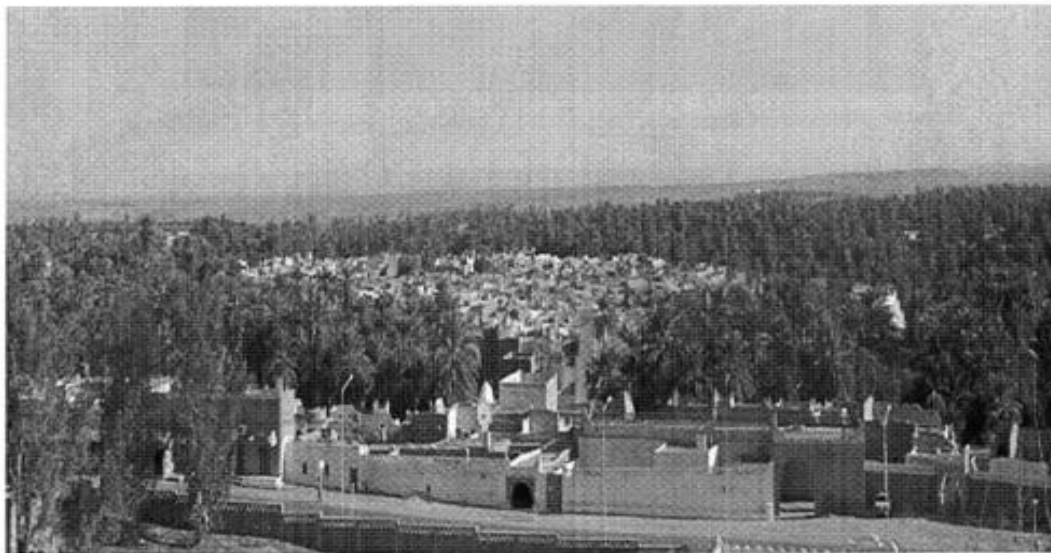
Planning for heritage conservation programs will maintain living heritage in these ancient oases such as Ghadames and to provide the opportunities including, sustainable development, and better economy programs for local peoples; safeguarding socio-cultural identity and promoting a strong sense of community pride alive for generations to come. However, paying special attention to ancient oases natural and built heritage environment

and working on particular conservation projects such as in Ghadames will provide physical, social, economic and environmental benefits to the region as a whole.

Planning for tourism in the Sahara is also important to local communities to regenerate living heritage and promote economic activities by making these sites safer and more attractive to entrepreneurs. In addition, tourism programs will also enhance facilities/services needed in each area with health, educational, commercial and recreational along with the necessary amenities to include, electricity, communications, roads, parkingstreet lights, water and sewage.

The Sahara region needs appropriate parties in the field of heritage conservation planning and management which can work and coordinate with international organizations such as *UNESCO* and mainly to focus on strategic actions of public awareness, communication, cooperation and coordination, and education and training with specialized learning process along with skilled leadership.

Consequently, it is vital to build a strong case for heritage plans for the Sahara ancient sites which requires identifying, protecting, preserving and managing heritage resources in each area. In this circumstance, the lack of a heritage plans to include legal policy, financial support and management framework also make this paper a prompt choice.



Main Entrance of the Organic City of Ghadames: Strategic Location with in the Oasis in the Middle of Sahara Desert as it is Surrounded and Protected by its Gardens



The Organic City of Ghadames. One of the Main Access to Gardens



House interiors of the main hall with its beautiful paintings in Ghadames



House Interiors, Main Hall: Decorative Elements, Ghadames



Traditional School in Ghadames



Town Squares in Ghadames



Neglected Heritage in the Middle East: The Abandoned Quarter of Ghadames



a)

b)

a) Squares of Ghadames: Before and After The Conservation Program
b) Mosques of Ghadames: Before and After The Conservation Program

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